NPS Forc. 10-900 (3-82) VLR- 10/16/84 NRHP-12/6/84

OMB No.1024-0018 Exp. 10-31-84

## United States **Department** of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

| 1. Name  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| historic WALKERTON                                       |  | (VHLC FILE #43-19)   |  |  |  |  |  |
| and or common N/A  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Location  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| street 8 number Mountain Roa                             | d  | N  | √/A not for publication  |  |  |  |  |
| city, town Glen Allen                                    | vicinity of  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <u>fate</u> Virginia                                     | code <sup>51</sup> count   | ~ Henrico  | code 087   |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Classification  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Category Ownership district public structure both site   | Status  X occupied  unoccupied  w o r k in progress  Accessible  X yes: restricted  no | Present Useagriculturecommercialeducationalentertainmentgovernmentindustrialmilitary | museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other: |  |  |  |  |
| name Krs. George D. Bowles street & number Mountain Road |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| city, town Glen Allen                                    | N/A vicinity of  | state  | Virginia 23060   |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Location of Le  | gal Descripti  | ion  |  |  |  |  |  |
| courthouse, registry of deeds. etc.                      | County of Henrico Cler   | ck's Office  |  |  |  |  |  |
| street & number County of Henri                          | co Government Center,  | , Parham Road  |  |  |  |  |  |
| city, town Richmond                                      | ,  | state  | Virginia 23233 🕳   |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Representatio   | n in Existing  | Surveys (See   | Continuation Sheet #   |  |  |  |  |
| (1) Virginia Historic Landma                             | arks Commission  | roperty been determined e  |  |  |  |  |  |
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### 7. Description

| Condition excellent | deteriorated | Check one X unaltered | Check one X original site |                           |           |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| good                | ruins        | altered               | moved date                | N/A                       |           |
| X fair              | unexposed    | *NOTE: Ma             | in house is in go         | od condition, except for  |           |
|                     |              | NI.                   | corner of rear b          | rick wall, which needs re | ebuildino |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Located in a semi-rural area of northern Henrico County, Walkerton is a twenty-two-acre tract containing one of the largest and best-preserved antebellum dwelling-cumtaverns in central Virginia. Built in 1825, it is a brick structure with four stories of living space, and may well be the most impressive building of its type ever erected in 19th-century Henrico. A number of architectural features distinguish it from other, more modest public hostelries functioning in the region during the antebellum era. These include its double set of interior stairways (one for guests and one for family and servants), its unusual semi-enclosed gable-end service porch, and a unique swinging vertical-board partition that allowed one of the upstairs rooms to function as a temporary dance hall. Other distinctive features now gone included a cage bar from which liquor was dispensed, a plank walkway leading from the carriage stop to the front porch, three separate detached icehouses, and a stable with stalls for twenty horses. Remaining early outbuildings include a servants' quarters, a wellhouse, a smokehouse, and a carriage house-cum-privy.

#### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

Walkerton is a level, partly wooded tract on the north side of Mountain Road in north central Henrico County. Suburban development at the northern fringe of the Richmond area extends within a mile of the house, but presently the stretch of road passing in front of the property maintains its rural character. The Walkerton tract occupies a broad ridge on the south side of the Chickahominy River which defines the boundary between Henrico and Hanover counties. The main dwelling stands about fifty yards from the road in a spacious yard shaded by giant cedars, osage orange trees, hollies, pin oaks, and tulip poplars. All outbuildings stand to the rear of the house in a large open yard rimmed by woods or tree lines.

The main building at Walkerton is a 2½-story brick structure set on a tall raised basement and covered with a shallow gable roof punctuated by three dormers on each slope. No additions mar its original form. The house measures 56'-11" x 39'-6" and features a symmetrical central-passage, double-pile plan on each of its four floors. The main or south facade is divided into five bays, with each set of windows placed well to the side of the central doorway. The gable walls, which each incorporate a pair of two interior end chimneys, are blank except at attic level, where pairs of small four-light windows admit light to the loft rooms. The long three-bay Colonial Revival porch with balustraded upper deck probably replaces an original full-length porch. An original single-story pedimented entry porch stands at the rear or north entry, and an original service porch with shiplapped siding and arched opening stands on the east gable end.

Exterior detailing remains largely intact. The front walls are laid in Flemish bond, but three-course American bond is used on the rear elevation and random American bond, three- to ten-course, appears on either side wall. The front wall still retains some of its early red paint, and traces of the original white-penciled mortar joints remain on all four walls. Upstairs windows are scaled down considerably from those on

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

### 8. Significance

| Period         | Areas of Significance—Carcheology-prehistoricagricultureX architectureartcommercecommunications | community planning conservation conservation conservation conservation conservation conservation conservation/settlement | landscape architectur law literature military music philosophy politics/government | religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater X transportation other (specify) |
|----------------|---|--|--|--|
| Specific dates | Ca. 1825  | Builder/Architect Unkr   | nown   |  |

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located along a developing but still largely rural stretch of Mountain Road in north central Henrico County, Walkerton is one of the largest and best-preserved antebellum tavernsin central Virginia. Built in 1825 for John Walker or one of his heirs, it served travelers along the Mountain Road, once a major route between Richmond and the western Piedmont. Stagecoaches stopped there regularly before the Civil War, and as late as 1900 a large carriage shed and stable accommodating twenty horses stood in the backyard. Having served as a private dwelling for over a century, the tavern is a  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -story brick structure with early wooden porches on three sides. contains several unusual architectural features, including two separate three-story stairways (a public one for guests and a private one for family and servants), a rare original enclosed service porch, and a unique hinged, swinging wooden partition that allowed one of the upstairs rooms to be enlarged into a ballroom. Four early outbuildings remain in the backyard, including a detached servants' quarters and smokehouse. Set in a handsome yard with towering shade trees, the house at Walkerton is an excellent example of an antebellum tavern, illustrating an important aspect of social and economic life in 19th-century Virginia.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Like other Virginia taverns, Walkerton no doubt served both as a place where travelers could eat and spend the night, and as a place where local farmers and other residents could meet, converse and drink. Taverns—which functioned as their owners' dwellings as well as their source of livelihood—were by default the primary social and service centers in a region lacking towns and villages. Besides serving as lodging, eating and drinking places, taverns often functioned as polling stations, post offices, marketplaces, and political gathering grounds.

Taverns were common elements of the antebellum Virginia landscape; indeed, in the western half of Henrico County alone, thirteen tavern licenses were taken out in 1829. Some stood along major highways and turnpikes, but most bordered less traveled roads. They varied greatly in size, ranging from humble one-story log or frame buildings to substantial structures like Walkerton, with specialized facilities and architectural (A typical tavern in early 19th century Henrico was Old Ordinary, near Dutch Gap, a single-story frame structure measuring only 32' x 26', according to an 1816 insurance policy.) Of the scores of dwellings known to have been once used as taverns in the county--including Chickahominy Tavern, Eight-Mile Tavern (Whiteside), Highland Springs Tavern, Short Pump Tavern, White's Tavern, Whichello, and Yellow Tavern--only Walkerton, Whiteside, and Whichello remain today. Moreover, Walkerton is both the largest and the only brick structure among this group of recorded Henrico taverns, and its distinctive architectural features--including porches, stairways, outbuildings and moveable partition--set it aside from most other surviving antebellum taverns in Virginia. (See Continuation Sheet #4)

| 9.            | <u>Major</u>                         | Bib                              | liogr                                  | aphi                    | cal F        | Refe                                  | renc                    | es                    | See Co                   | ntinuati                   | ion She                    | et #6)   |
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# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

WALKERTON, HENRICO COUNTY, VA Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6, 7

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### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Henrico County Survey
1975-76 X county
County of Henrico Clerk's Office
County of Henrico Government Center, Parham Road
Richmond, Virginia 23233

### 7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

the main floor—perhaps to allow space for the shed roof of a former two—story front porch that may have occupied the area between the tops of the upstairs windows and the eaves. All windows retain their original sash, with nine—over—six lights on the main floor and six—over—six lights upstairs. The three front and rear gable—roofed dormers feature three—over—six sash and nave cheeks sheathed with diagonal beaded boards. Windows are outlined with simple wooden facings with corner blocks at the lintels. All exterior entries contain single—leaf six—raised—panel doors. The front door is set off by narrow pilasters and topped by a four—light transom. The door directly above it, which opens onto the porch deck, boasts a double—tier transom.

The interior of the house remains by and large unaltered. The floor plan's absolute symmetry is unusual and advanced for this period. All rooms on each of the three lower floors measure slightly over  $18' \times 20'$ . The top or attic story also has a double-pile, central-passage plan, but here the rooms are smaller. Throughout the house doors and windows are faced with symmetrically-molded casings with bull's-eye corner blocks. A pedestal chair rail surrounds the rooms on the principal floors, and original plaster sheathes all walls. Original 6"-wide pine flooring remains throughout the house.

All first- and second-floor mantels are alike except for that in the southwest chamber. Tall and narrow, they feature symmetrically-molded pilasters, a plain frieze with vertically-reeded tablet and end blocks, and a heavily-molded shelf that breaks out over the tablet and end blocks. An original narrow plaster cornice with molded acanthus-leaf motif decorates the passage and two front rooms. In adddition, a plaster picture rail carries around the passage, and plaster ceiling medallions decorate the two front rooms.

Unlike most houses of its size and period, Walkerton contains two original stairways: one at the back of the main passage, and one in the northeast room. The existence of two separate stairs strongly suggests the house was built to serve as a tavern, the main stair being used for public access to rooms, and the rear stair being reserved for family and servants. It is significant that the lesser stair is located in the rear room that communicates directly with the east gable-end service porch, and through it to a detached kitchen which undoubtedly stood on this side of the house.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

WALKERTON, HENRICO COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #2

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### 7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The main stair is of open-string form and U plan. It rises three stories, having an an open well and broad landings midway at each level. The landings are lighted by central windows on the first and second floors, and by a dormer at the third-story level. The main-floor stair features a recessed-panel spandrel and wave-form tread brackets. While most of the woodwork is painted, newels and balusters are of varnished mahogany. Newels are turned in the shape of a tapering Tuscan colonnette with square base and head, and are capped with ball finials. The mushroom-section railing is supported by two rectangular-section balusters per tread.

The northeast stair, which has an identical balustrade, is of closed-string form and forms an ell in plan. Like the main stair, it ascends to the third floor, but there is no longer direct access to the basement, as there is beneath the main stair.

Detailing throughout the house is remarkably uniform, but a certain hierarchy of decoration is nonetheless evident. For example, only the front main-floor rooms contain plaster ceiling medallions and cornices. Interior door trim is embellished with false-keystone lintels only in the two front main-floor rooms and in the first-and second-floor passages. Similarly, decorated tread brackets appear on the main stair only at first-floor level; above that, stair stringers are plain. It is also worth noting that the top-story rooms have no mantels: either they were unheated originally, or they were warmed by stoves.

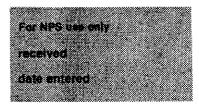
According to oral tradition, a cage bar once stood in the east front room, or taproom. Measuring six or seven feet square, it stood in the inner rear corner of the room, where its shadow is still visible. In the 1930s, Archer Evans reported that it "still has the rail and window through which drinks were conveyed to thirsty travelers." Bars of this sort were common in larger and better-built taverns in 18th- and 19th-century Virginia. Having a counter encircled by a slatted "cage," and with rear walls lined with shelves, such bars were used for storing liquor and drinking vessels and could be locked when unattended.

The single most interesting architectural feature at Walkerton is the swinging, hinged vertical-board partition at the front of the upstairs passage. Forming the passage wall of the west front room, it is about sixteen feet long and is divided into two segments. The longer segment can be swung out to close off the (south) front of the passage, thus creating a larger room, which according to tradition, was used for dances. (The shorter four foot long southern segment of the partition segment folds back against the exterior wall.) This moveable partition may also have been used to create more sleeping space in the southwest room when the tavern was full of guests. Sliding doors, or folding, accordion-like partitions, have been recorded in other Virginia houses, but they are always used to divide double front parlors. No solid, hinged partition nor upstairs folding partition has been recorded to date in any other 19th-century house in the state.

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WALKERTON, HENRICO COUNTY, VA Continuation sheet #3

Item number 7



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### 7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The raised basement extends under the entire house and has a symmetrical central-passage plan like that on the other floors of the house. The walls are of painted or whitewashed brick and the floors are of either dirt or poured cement, though at one time some of the rooms may have been floored with wood. Three-over-three-light sash windows are disposed like those of the upper floors. Only one basement room has a fireplace: that in the northeast room, under the present kitchen. This room, which communicates directly with the side service porch, was probably used for cooking, warming and/or preparing food in the 19th century.

Walkerton retains two of its original three porches. The front porch, while dating at least partially to the early 20th century, is visually compatible with the house, illustrating changing architectural fashions in rural Henrico. According to a 1936 WPA report, in the 19th century this porch, or an earlier version of it, featured stairways leading down from either end. These wooden stairs led to a platform that projected about fifteen feet out into the yard. The date of this platform is uncertain, but it may have been built especially to accommodate travelers. Presumably, guests could alight from their coaches and walk to the front door without muddying their feet. No other platform or walkway of this type has yet been recorded in Virginia, but in the 19th century it may not have been an unusual amenity at larger taverns.

The distyle, single-bay rear porch is a rare survivor from the 1820s, consisting of a pedimented roof supported by two tapering Tuscan columns fashioned from solid logs. The balustrade of this porch is a replacement.

The east gable-end service porch is the most interesting of the three, and may be a unique architectural survival. This porch shelters stairways leading from the yard and detached kitchen to both the northeast main-floor room, which contained the private servants' stair, and to the northeast basement room, which contained a large fireplace where food was probably stored and heated, undergoing final preparation before being served. This porch is supported by square posts and covered with a shallow shed roof that was probably lowered in pitch at some point in time. Each end is covered with horizontal shiplapped boards, and the east face is sheathed with wooden latticework that admits light and air while providing some shelter from sun and driving rain or snow. Such porches were probably common on larger farmhouses and taverns in the 19th century (as early insurance policies suggest), but no surviving porch of this kind has been documented in central Virginia.

Four early frame outbuildings stand in the backyard at Walkerton. That nearest the dwelling--just ten feet north of the service porch--is a square, pyramidal-roofed wellhouse with ball-shaped roof finial. A 13'-4" square pyramidal-roofed smokehouse stands northwest of the dwelling and is now attached to a 20th-century garage. The early carriage house-cum-privy stands just northeast of, and at right angles to, the garage. On the opposite side of the yard, about twenty yards northeast of the

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

WALKERTON, HENRICO COUNTY, VA Continuation sheet #4

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#### 7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

dwelling, is an antebellum servants' quarters that may also have functioned as a kitchen and/or laundry. This one-story, two-unit, central-chimney-plan structure measures 16'-6" x 31'-2". Typical of other Virginia buildings of its kind, it features a separate entrance at either end of the main facade. Inside, two small enclosed corner stairs lead to the sleeping loft. The central brick chimney with 4'-wide fireplaces was probably originally used for both heating and cooking. However, since Walkerton was such a large tavern, there may originally have been another detached kitchen closer to the house and having a bigger fireplace than that in the surviving kitchen/quarters.

Several other early service buildings stood on the property in the early part of this century. A 1936 WPA report on Walkerton states that, "To the rear (of the servants' quarters) was the barn, a massive structure almost as large as the house. It was of frame construction and was so large that it had stalls for twenty horses and a side lean-to that took care of all of the stage coaches that traveled the Mountain Road." According to this report, three large icehouses, now long since filled in, also stood in the backyard. At the front of the house, incidentally, "a heavy plank walk led from the road to the inn."

The cemetery stands about thirty yards northwest of the main house in a grove of cedars. Mid- to late 19th-century inscribed stones commemorate seven members of the Hopkins family. The earliest recorded burial is that of Fannie Hopkins (1792-1866), but the cemetery may well contain unmarked graves dating to the first half of the 19th century or earlier.

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

The earliest known owner of the Walkerton property was John Walker of Henrico, from whose name Walkerton is derived. According to oral tradition, Walker was an English immigrant to Virginia who ran a tavern at or near this site as early as 1779. Walker is said to have owned two dwellings; one stood on the north side of Mountain Road about where the present brick building stands, and another stood across from it on the south side of the road. The dwelling on the south side of the road—a brick structure—burned shortly after the Civil War. That on the north side of the road (if tradition is correct and such an early building indeed existed) must have been replaced by the present brick house in 1825.

The Henrico deed books show that John Walker actively acquired land in the county between 1782 and 1825. By 1799 he owned two hundred acres in the immediate vicinity of the present house; the land and buildings were then valued for assessment purposes at  $\pounds47-10-0$ . By 1821, Walker's property had grown to 368 acres, with buildings assessed at \$3,000, indicating that one or more substantial dwellings already stood on the tract.

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

Continuation sheet

## **United States Department of the Interior**National Park Service

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#### 8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

Walker died in 1825 or early 1826. Ironically, the land tax books indicate that the present house was completed at about that same time--either immediately before or after Walker's death. The impressive size and quality of the new house is indicated by a marginal note in the land tax book of 1826, which states that a "\$3,000 (assessment was) added for a new house." This brought the total value of buildings on Walker's parcels--including farm structures and outbuildings--to \$6,000, an extremely large sum for the time.

No tavern licenses could be found in Walker's name to prove he operated a public house at the site; in fact, he may have leased the tavern to someone else. At any rate, several facts strongly suggest that Walker (or a lessee) did run a tavern at Walkerton, either in the present building or a previous one. First, an 1820s deed refers to the Walkerton parcel as "the Tavern Tract." Moreover, the fact that Walker was able to afford such a pretentious house while holding a relatively small parcel of land suggests he supplemented his income by some means other than farming—probably as an innkeeper. It might also be noted that the brick house at Walkerton stands cheek—to—jowl by the main road, in contrast to the vast majority of coeval Virginia farmhouses, which stood at the center of large tracts well off major thoroughfares.

In June 1828, Walker's heirs sold the 92-acre "Tavern Tract" to John P. White of Henrico. By the following year White had acquired two other 150-acre tracts, but the tax books show that only the 92-acre parcel held a substantial building. Since White took out tavern licenses for several consecutive years in the late 1820s and early 1830s, one can reasonably assume that he ran Walkerton as a public house.

White sold the property to John J. Dickinson in 1834, and during the next two decades the tavern passed through the hands of twelve different short-term owners. During this time it is possible that the tavern was leased to one or more innkeepers.

In 1855 John Wright paid \$3,000 for the 262-acre Walkerton tract. After Wright's death in the 1860s, it remained in his estate, finally being transferred in 1881 to members of the Hopkins family, who were evidently relatives of the deceased. Hopkins family members evidently lived at Walkerton either before or soon after Wright's death, since markers in the family cemetery behind the house show that Fannie, Erasmus and Delia Hopkins were buried between 1866 and 1879. Later family burials include those of Josephine Hopkins (1837-1896) and George Hopkins (1829-1907).

The property remained in the Hopkins family until 1941, when local attorney George D. Bowles and his wife Ruth bought Walkerton. Mrs. Bowles still occupies the house, which has remained essentially unaltered during her tenure.

In 1936 Archer Evans noted in his WPA report that "Mrs. (Guy) Hopkins has in her possession much of the original furniture (used in the tavern, as well as) old kettles, tripods, cranes, china, old cowhide trunks, hat boxes, (and) hair trunks both round

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WALKERTON, HENRICO COUNTY, VA

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### 8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

and square that were used in travel on the stage coaches. She has persistently refused all sale of these relics in order to preserve the tradition handed down to her husband." Shortly before the house was sold in 1941, most of these items were auctioned off, but some stayed with the house. Among the early furnishings still at Walkerton are two early pine tavern tables and fireplace cranes and cooking equipment. Local tradition recalls that the place was once a mail delivery station, and a tier of early wooden postal slots remains in the basement.

It is uncertain how long Walkerton remained in use as a tavern after John White sold it, since tavern licenses could not be found for some of the later, short-term owners. According to local tradition, the house was used as a field hospital during the bloody skirmishes around Richmond in 1864, including the nearby Battle of Yellow Tavern, where Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart fell. Bloodstains supposedly dating from this period remain on the upstairs flooring.

Very few changes have been made to the property in this century. The present Colonial Revival front porch probably replaced the original full-length one shortly after 1900. The old carriage shed and stable burned in 1908, and the cage bar in the southeast room was removed in the late 1930s. However, the house has been subjected to no major alterations since then, and it has never been enlarged or disfigured by additions. It retains two of its original porches and all of its original interior detailing, including several rare or unique features illustrating, in brick and wood, the specialized functions of an antebellum tavern.

Today Walkerton is located on the fringes of a rapidly developing suburban area. The present owner is strongly committed to ensuring that the handsome traditional setting of the house—as well as it architectural fabric—is preserved.

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(See Continuation Sheet #7)

